1: Drew G-2 (1862-1872) 1875 AVI Kashmir
Dard AV3

From Hattú Pír there is a great descent, of about 5000 feet, by a zigzag road, steep and rough. We do not immediately reach the Indus Valley, but we go first to where the end of the Hattú spur nearly meets the mountain on the opposite side of the Astor River, leaving but a narrow channel for the water. Here the Astor River is spanned by two rope-bridges, made of birch twigs, and by a wooden bridge, over which ponies can be taken; a tower has been built that commands the passage; the position is held by some forty soldiers, who keep a good look-out. The place is a strange one; the soldiers live in caves in the rock; the rock overhangs, so as to keep off the sunshine for the greater part of the day; still the air becomes burning hot in summer; in winter, though no snow falls, the cold is somewhat severe.

Here crossing and following down the Astor River we soon debouch into the Indus Valley and find ourselves on the stony alluvial tracts, over nine miles of which, with small ups and downs, we have to go before reaching Bawanjí.

BAWANJÍ.

This is a spot where at one time was a good deal of cultivation, and it is likely that fruit-trees once shaded it; but during the wars of two or three generations back it was laid waste and became entirely depopulated, and nought but bare ground remained. At that earlier time it was inhabited by Dárds, but was ruled, as I am informed, from Rondú; it was by Sulaimán Sháh's invasion that it was laid waste.* At the present time Bawanjí has a very small area under cultivation, but the place is of some importance as a military post, since on the holding of it depends the passage of the Indus on the way to Gilgit. There is a fort which was built by the Dográs; it is manned by about seventy men, and as many more are in barracks outside. There is here also a prison, where a gang of incorrigible Kashmírí horse-stealers are detained; these men enjoy during the day some liberty for cultivating their plots of land. The valley here is warm and dry; with irrigation two crops can always be

* See Chapter XIX.